

When I arrived in Haworth, Yorkshire on July 2, 2009, I discovered a poster stating the following about the panel discussion in which I would participate the next evening: "This event is a rare opportunity to hear some of the most important Brontë scholars come together from various parts of the world." This certainly marked a moment of personal fulfilment for me as a scholar since the panel meant meeting with colleagues from North America, the United Kingdom, and Australia to discuss a project on which we'd worked for four years, my co-edited essay collection *The Brontës in the World of the Arts* (Ashgate 2008). But it also marked a moment at which I could share with an international audience the kind of interdisciplinary research in the arts that's being done at Vancouver Island University. In addition, a number of unexpected informal opportunities to talk about my home university and my work there presented themselves during my visit.

The panel discussion (July 3) drew an audience varied in age, occupation, and geographical origin to West Lane Baptist Centre, which was full. As one in a series of talks and exhibitions that make up the Brontë Parsonage Museum Contemporary Arts Programme, our discussion represented the chance not only to present our own research, but also to join a vibrant ongoing discussion among creative writers, visual and other artists, scholars, and enthusiasts. (A brochure for the 2009 Programme, whose Honorary Patron is internationally-known scholar Germaine Greer, can be found at [http://www.bronte.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=154&Itemid=206](http://www.bronte.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=154&Itemid=206).) Delivered from a variety of arts-perspectives—and in a variety of accents—our talk met with a lively response from the audience. The discussion with audience members that followed elicited important insights on both sides of the table about the relationships between art-making, art reception, and scholarship. These insights are ones that I am currently putting into practice in my teaching of English 125, Literature and Culture. Indeed, the opportunity to have had such a discussion outside my home context with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds has enriched my approach to culture and allowed me to relate to the international students in this, and my other classes, in new ways. I look forward to discovering the ways in which it will inform future classes at all levels.

Both before and after the event, we speakers had the opportunity to meet informally with several audience members. Their reasons for

studying literature and the arts and approaches to the topic have invigorated my own approach. This is information I will be able to draw on when sharing my research with the Nanaimo community. I hope to be able to do this as part of a new partnership the English Department is forming with the Public Library.

As well, it ensures that my own research is grounded in ideas that matter to the wider community as well as to academics. Informal talks with other visitors to Haworth about the Brontës—one unfolding as we walked the moors—added to this information. (The small village hosts thousands of visitors over the summer months.) Happily, I was able to complement this community engagement with direct study of the arts in museums and at cultural events in Paris and Amsterdam. I am grateful to have had this opportunity to learn and teach away from the Island during the summer. With Renaissance philosopher Sir Francis Bacon, I can attest that “He that traveleth...goeth to school, and not to travel.”